

**IN THE CLAIMS**

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A link manager comprising:  
detecting means for detecting a link installation;  
managing means for defining a plurality of link metrics indicating characteristics of each said link detected and managing data corresponding to said respective link metrics on a table;  
link metric rank assigning means for assigning ranks to said respective link metrics, based on a predetermined preference;  
data rank assigning means for assigning ranks to the data corresponding to said respective link metrics; and  
selecting means for selecting a link by analyzing each link based on each individual stored metric in order of rank, and selecting a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a link metric with a highest rank,  
wherein said selecting means selects a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a link metric with a next highest rank, when there exists a plurality of records having data with the highest rank thus assigned.

Claim 2 (Original): The link manager according to Claim 1, wherein  
said managing means generates a record comprised of the data corresponding to said respective link metrics, for each link on said table.

Claim 3 (Original): The link manager according to Claim 2, wherein

when a new link corresponding to neither said record is detected, said managing means generates a record corresponding to said new link and records data corresponding to link metrics of said link and wherein when a link corresponding to either said record becomes undetectable, said managing means deletes said record.

Claims 4-5 (Canceled).

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): A link management method comprising:  
a detecting step of detecting a link installation;  
a managing step of defining a plurality of link metrics indicating characteristics of each said link detected and managing data corresponding to said respective link metrics on a table;  
a step of assigning ranks to said respective link metrics, based on a predetermined preference;  
a step of assigning ranks to the data corresponding to said respective link metrics; and  
a selecting step of selecting a link by analyzing each link based on each individual stored metric in order of rank, and selecting a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a link metric with a highest rank,  
wherein said selecting step comprises a step of selecting a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a link metric with the next highest rank, when there exists a plurality of records having data with the highest rank thus assigned.

Claim 7 (Original): The link management method according to Claim 6, which comprises

a step of generating a record comprised of the data corresponding to said respective link metrics, for each link on said table.

Claim 8 (Original): The link management method according to Claim 7, which comprises a step wherein when a new link corresponding to neither said record is detected, a record corresponding to said new link is generated and data corresponding to link metrics of said link is recorded and wherein when a link corresponding to either said record becomes undetectable, said record is deleted.

Claims 9-10 (Canceled).

Claim 11 (Currently Amended): A computer program product including a computer-readable memory with a computer program code mechanism stored therein, which when executed by a computer causes the computer to perform a method of link management, comprising steps of:

detecting a link installation;

defining a plurality of link metrics indicating characteristics of each said link detected and managing data corresponding to said respective link metrics on a table;

a process of generating a record comprised of the data corresponding to said respective link metrics, for each link on said table;

assigning ranks to said respective link metrics, based on a predetermined preference;

assigning ranks to the data corresponding to said respective link metrics; and

when said predetermined preference is given, analyzing each link based on each individual metric in the ranking order of the respective metrics and selecting a link

corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a link metric with a highest rank, and

selecting a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a link metric with a next highest rank, when there exist a plurality of records having data with the highest rank thus assigned.

Claim 12 (Canceled).

Claim 13 (Currently Amended): The computer program product according to Claim 11 ~~or Claim 12~~, which comprises a process wherein when a new link corresponding to neither said record is detected, a record corresponding to said new link is generated and data corresponding to link metrics of said link is recorded and wherein when a link corresponding to either said record becomes undetectable, said record is deleted.

Claim 14 (Canceled).

Claim 15 (Currently Amended): A link manager comprising:  
detecting means for detecting a link installation;  
managing means for defining a plurality of constant link metrics and variable link metrics, each indicating characteristics of each said link detected and managing data corresponding to said respective link metrics on a table, said managing means monitoring the variable link metrics which vary over time; and

selecting means for selecting a link by analyzing each link based on each individual stored constant and variable link metric in order of rank, and selecting a link corresponding to

a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a constant or variable link metric with a highest rank,

wherein said selecting means selects a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a constant or variable link metric with a next highest rank, when there exists a plurality of records having data with the highest rank thus assigned.

Claim 16 (Previously Presented): The link manager according to Claim 15, wherein said managing means generates a record comprised of the data corresponding to said respective constant and variable link metrics, for each link on said table.

Claim 17 (Previously Presented): The link manager according to Claim 16, wherein when a new link corresponding to neither said record is detected, said managing means generates a record corresponding to said new link and records data corresponding to constant and variable link metrics of said link and wherein when a link corresponding to either said record becomes undetectable, said managing means deletes said record.

Claim 18 (Previously Presented): The link manager according to Claim 15, which comprises:

link metric rank assigning means for assigning ranks to said constant and variable link metrics, based on a predetermined preference; and  
data rank assigning means for assigning ranks to the data corresponding to said constant and variable link metrics,

wherein when said predetermined preference is given, said selecting means selects a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a constant or variable link metric with a highest rank.

Claim 19 (Canceled).

Claim 20 (Currently Amended): A link management method comprising:  
a detecting step of detecting a link installation;  
a managing step of defining a plurality of constant link metrics and variable link metrics, each indicating characteristics of each said link detected and managing data corresponding to said respective link metrics on a table, said managing means monitoring the variable link metrics which vary over time; and

a selecting step of selecting a link by analyzing each link based on each individual stored constant and variable metric in order of rank, and selecting a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a constant or variable link metric with a highest rank,

wherein said selecting step comprises a step of selecting a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a constant or variable link metric with the next highest rank, when there exists a plurality of records having data with the highest rank thus assigned.

Claim 21 (Previously Presented): The link management method according to Claim 20, which comprises

a step of generating a record comprised of the data corresponding to said respective constant and variable link metrics, for each link on said table.

Claim 22 (Previously Presented): The link management method according to Claim 21, which comprises a step wherein when a new link corresponding to neither said record is detected, a record corresponding to said new link is generated and data corresponding to constant and variable link metrics of said link is recorded and wherein when a link corresponding to either said record becomes undetectable, said record is deleted.

Claims 23 (Previously Presented): The link management method according to Claim 20, which comprises:

a step of assigning ranks to said constant and variable link metrics, based on a predetermined preference; and

a step of assigning ranks to the data corresponding to said constant and variable link metrics,

wherein said selecting step comprises a step of, when said predetermined preference is given, selecting a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a constant or variable link metric with a highest rank.

Claim 24 (Canceled).

Claim 25 (Currently Amended): A computer program product including a computer-readable memory with a computer program code mechanism stored therein, which when

executed by a computer causes the computer to perform a method of link management, comprising steps of:

detecting a link installation;

defining a plurality of constant link metric and variable link metrics, each indicating characteristics of each said link detected and managing data corresponding to said respective link metrics on a table, and monitoring the variable link metrics which vary over time;

a process of generating a record comprised of the data corresponding to said respective constant and variable link metrics, for each link on said table;

assigning ranks to said respective link metrics, based on a predetermined preference;

assigning ranks to the data corresponding to said respective constant and variable link metrics; and

when said predetermined preference is given, analyzing each link based on each individual metric in the ranking order of the respective constant and variable metrics and selecting a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a constant or variable link metric with a highest rank, and

selecting a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a constant or variable link metric with a next highest rank, when there exist a plurality of records having data with the highest rank thus assigned.

Claim 26 (Canceled).

Claim 27 (Currently Amended): The computer program product according to Claim 25 ~~or Claim 26~~, which comprises a process wherein when a new link corresponding to neither said record is detected, a record corresponding to said new link is generated and data

corresponding to constant and variable link metrics of said link is recorded and wherein when a link corresponding to either said record becomes undetectable, said record is deleted.

Claim 28 (Canceled)

Claim 29 (Currently Amended): A link manager comprising:  
a detector configured to detect a link installation;  
a processor configured to define a plurality of constant link metrics and variable link metrics, each indicating characteristics of each said link detected and managing data corresponding to said respective link metrics on a table, said managing means monitoring the variable link metrics which vary over time; and  
a processor configured to select a link by analyzing each link based on each individual stored constant and variable link metric in order of rank, and selecting a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a constant or variable link metric with a highest rank,  
wherein processor is configured to select a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a link metric with a next highest rank, when there exists a plurality of records having data with the highest rank thus assigned.